

Message Text

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70

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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IO-13 ACDA-07 /080 W

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R 061400Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2157

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN FRG

DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4644

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, LE

SUBJECT: TRAFFIC ACROSS THE ISRAELI/LEBANESE BORDER

1. DURING JULY 6 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR TOON AND DIRECTOR OF SSM, KONTOS, MINDEF PERES DISCUSSED SITUATION ON ISRAEL'S BORDERS. HE MADE POINT THAT BORDER CONDITIONS ARE REMARKABLE GIVEN FACT THAT A STATE OF WAR STILL EXISTS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND HER NEIGHBORS. PERES CALLED THE EGYPTIAN FRONTIER "PEACEFUL," STRESSED THE "OPEN BRIDGES" POLICY ON THE JORDANIAN FRONTIER, AND DESCRIBED THE LEBANESE BORDER AS "THE MOST PEACEFUL FRONTIER IN THE WORLD."

2. FROM HIS DESCRIPTION IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT THERE IS A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC ACROSS THIS BORDER. PERES CLAIMS THAT WELL OVER A THOUSAND LEBANESE HAVE CROSSED INTO ISRAEL FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. MOST ARE TREATED AND RETURN IMMEDIATELY TO LEBANON. SOME HOWEVER, ARE ADMITTED TO ISRAELI HOSPITALS WHERE THEY STAY AS LONG AS REQUIRED. THESE LATTER INCLUDE CASUALTIES OF THE FIGHTING AS WELL
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AS WOMEN ABOUT TO GIVE BIRTH. THE IDF HAS ESTABLISHED

CLINICS NEAR THE BORDER, BUT PERES ASSERTED THAT CIVILIAN HOSPITALS ARE NOW COMPETING TO SEND PEOPLE AND EQUIPMENT AS WELL.

3. THIS WHOLE PROGRAM STARTED SLOWLY, WITH SMALL NUMBERS OF LEBANESE CHRISTIANS CROSSING FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT, BUT SOON MUSLIMS WERE ASKING IF ISRAEL WAS DISCRIMINATING AGAINST THEM. CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS NOW CROSSING IN INCREASING NUMBERS. PERES CLAIMED THAT NOW FATAH SUPPORTERS ARE ALSO CROSSING FOR TREATMENT. DECISION TO PUBLICIZE THIS PROGRAM RESULTED FROM REQUEST OF LEBANESE PEOPLE INVOLVED.

4. TRAFFIC IS NOT RESTRICTED TO MEDICAL PATIENTS, ACCORDING TO PERES. LEBANESE ARE BUYING FOOD FROM ISRAELIS AND ISRAELIS ARE BUYING TOBACCO FROM LEBANESE FARMERS. IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FROM THE LEBANESE PEOPLE, THE IDF HAS LAID A WATER PIPELINE INTO SOUTHERN LEBANON AND IS PUMPING ISRAELI WATER TO THAT AREA. LEBANESE PEOPLE REQUESTED ON JULY 5 THAT ISRAEL OPEN A "SUPERMARKET" ON THE BORDER, WHICH PERES SAID ISRAEL IS PREPARED TO DO.

5. MOST STRIKING POINT WAS PERES' ASSERTION THAT A LEBANESE VILLAGE (POPULATION 6,000 CHRISTIANS) SENT A RESOLUTION TO THE GOI, REQUESTING THAT IT BE ANNEXED BY ISRAEL. PERES LAUGHINGLY SAID THAT GOI'S ANSWER WAS "WE'VE GOT ENOUGH PROBLEMS WITH THE U.S. WITHOUT BITING OFF THIS ONE."
TOON

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